

### **Interior Secretary to Hold Hearing on Nation's Offshore Energy Plans**

SAN FRANCISCO, [Bay City News Service](#)

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar will conclude a nationwide series of public meetings about the country's offshore energy strategy -- including the controversial topic of offshore oil drilling in California -- in San Francisco next week.

The hearing Thursday at the University of California at San Francisco will be the fourth by Salazar, who was appointed by President Obama to head the department that oversees U.S. parks, dams and reservoirs, and more than 1.7 billion acres of the nation's offshore territories.

"The secretary is looking to have a comprehensive energy plan on the Outer Continental Shelf," said his spokeswoman Kendra Barkoff.

Federal jurisdiction extends from three miles to about 200 miles offshore. The state oversees waters up to three miles offshore.

Barkoff said Salazar's plan includes renewable energy sources, such as wind, tidal and wave power.

"He wants to have an open and honest conversation, not just about oil and gas, and where drilling may or may not be appropriate, but also how we develop our offshore renewable resources," said Barkoff.

Salazar has already led meetings earlier this month in Atlantic City and New Orleans, and a third meeting is planned in Anchorage, Alaska on Tuesday.

Thursday's hearing is expected to include testimony by government officials, environmental groups, members of the oil industry, and local stakeholders.

Among them will be California Lt. Gov. John Garamendi, an outspoken opponent of offshore drilling and a former deputy U.S. Secretary of the Interior under President Clinton. The Democrat has also initiated a campaign for governor of California in 2010.

"I've been opposed to offshore drilling for 30 years now, and I've firmly believed since 1978 that we need to move from oil to renewable resources," Garamendi said in a phone interview today.

Garamendi said one of the issues Salazar will be gathering information on is a proposal in the waning days of the Bush administration to offer new leases to oil companies for offshore drilling in federal waters off California.

"My position is that he should rescind the Bush administration's proposal to lease," said Garamendi, "and withhold these areas from lease and oil production."

Salazar has not yet made public what the Interior Department's exact policy will be on drilling offshore in California, where according to the State Lands Commission, there are currently 23 active oil platforms in federal waters, with a total of 424 oil wells.

In state waters, there are four active oil platforms, as well as five artificial islands with active wells, totaling 900 oil wells, according to the Lands Commission.

All of the wells, in both state and federal waters, are located off Southern California, from Long Beach north to Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.

Garamendi said he will also testify about "the billions of dollars" that could be spent on renewable energy instead of developing new oil fields.

"That money should be spent on developing renewable energy resources such as wind, geothermal, solar and biofuels," he said.

"The taxpayers of America have subsidized the oil industry for more than a century," said Garamendi, adding it was now time for the oil industry to give back.

Though the oil industry has already begun to show interest in investing in renewable energies, Garamendi said substantial subsidies offered by the Obama administration for private investment in renewables may push them even further.

"So they're going to follow the money," Garamendi said, "and the money should shift from oil to renewables."